

## 44 SMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER

bank, after bathing, they acted some scenes together.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, they knew entire plays, and on the way home, in the twilight, they would adapt their steps to the rhythm of those lines which were sonorous like trumpet-blasts. But a day came when one of them produced a volume of Alfred de Musset's poems, the perusal of which set their hearts quivering. From that hour their worship for Hugo received a great blow, his lines fled from their memories, and Musset alone reigned over them. He became their constant companion in the hollows, the grottoes, the little village inns where they rested; and, again, they read "Kolla" or the "Nights" aloud.<sup>2</sup>

Thus their young natures awoke to love. Cdzanne and Bailie were then about eighteen years of age; Zola was seventeen. But their aspirations remained full of ideality. There were a few brief, uncertain attempts at love-making, nipped in the bud by circumstances. Already, before the time we have now reached, Zola, or his musically minded friend Marguery, or perhaps both, had nursed a boyish flame for the fair-haired daughter of a local haberdasher, and had serenaded her in company, the former with his clarionet, the latter with a *cornet-k-piston*, until one evening the indignant parents emptied their water-jugs over

them. Later  
Zola dreamt of encountering "fair beings in his  
rambles,  
beautiful maidens, who would suddenly spring  
up in some  
strange wood, charm him for a whole day, and  
melt into air  
at dusk."<sup>3</sup> And at last a young girl, Gratiennne,  
flits by in  
the moonlight near the Clos des Chartreux,  
with her heavy

<sup>1</sup> Zola's "Nos Auteurs Dramatiques," p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> "Documents Littéraires," p. 90.

\* "L'Œuvre/Critique. II.